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ABSTRACT

In Europe, prejudice and stereotyping of Gypsies and Travellers often result in the failure of measures aimed at helping this group. This book resulted from a request of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to the Council of Europe to prepare teacher information packs on the history, culture, and family life of nomadic populations as part of work in intercultural education. There are two sections. The first, on sociocultural data, examines Gypsy origins in northwest India and their dispersal throughout Europe in several waves of migration from the 12th century to the present; populations; language; social organization; travel; the family; religion; economic organization; art; and lifestyle and identity. The history of Gypsy interactions with outsiders and the treatment to which they have been subjected is examined in the second part, on sociopolitical data. Rejection remains a dominant factor in relations between Gypsies and the surrounding population, and the strong points of this culture are also its vulnerabilities. Communal living, marginal subsistence economy, present-time orientation, nomadism, dispersion, linguistic variety, and solidarity become weaknesses when Gypsies find themselves immersed in a society determined to assimilate them, and which embodies the opposite characteristics. Gypsy parents often oppose school because of a history of forced assimilation, adverse effects on children's upbringing, and interference with traditional nonformal education. A chapter on schooling presents an overview of various educational strategies aimed at Gypsy children and suggests ways of moving toward multiculturalism in school. The final chapter contains reflections and suggestions for actions to improve intergroup relations. (TD)

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